# THE RAGTIMER

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PUBLISHED BY

THE RAGTIME SOCIETY

DEDICATED TO THE PRESERVATION OF CLASSICAL RAGTIME

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THE RAGTIME SOCIETY
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To preserve classical ragtime music and to pursue such other activities as shall serve to maintain and develop interest in classical ragtime music and music related thereto.

1962 - 1972

YOU
can make the
Tenth Anniversary Year
Celebrations of
THE RAGTIME SOCIETY Inc.
more significant
by securing at least one
new member for the Society
this year

PLEASE NOTE FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION!

## RAGTIME...

# UNDER YOUR HAT

Our tenth anniversary year celebration provides us with its own brand of stimulation and we want to measure up to reasonable expectations.

With these thoughts in mind the decision was made to issue a membership card to every member for the tenth anniversary year of the SOCIETY. It is attached to this issue of THE RAGTIMER. We hope you will find it attractive. Please validate the card by inscribing your name. To save you from raising the question, we would like to be able to make this an annual practice from now on.

We do worry a little about mounting printing, handling and mailing costs. The membership card seems like a worthwhile addition to those costs. At the same time we would like to hold the annual membership fee at $5. 00 as long as we can. This somehow suggests mutually beneficial activities by our members. Aside from promoting RAGTIME, every added membership broadens the base for a sharing of fixed costs. By now you will have picked up part of the reason for the exhortation contained in the message box on this page.

Every year there are always a few members who do not renew their membership. The last issue of THE RAGTIMER (January-February) contained the final notice. The current issue is not sent out to those who have failed to renew for the year 1972. If you know of anyone who missed receiving THE RAGTIMER and did not renew simply because of good oldfashioned tardiness then a little jogging from you could be all it needs. A new membership can produce growth but it is a renewal that provides for the health and continuity of the SOCIETY.

One final comment. The last part of Roger Hankins' unusual article "The Nine Lives Of Maple Leaf Rag" is contained in this issue. You can easily get the chilling feeling that you laughed too soon as the 9's syndrome gradually changes into a 9's phenomena.

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# SOUNDS FAMILIAR

ROGER HANKINS

## THE NINE LIVES OF MAPLE LEAF RAG

Notice! Do Not Read This Article Fast. It Is Never Right To Read About Maple Leaf Rag Fast.

Author

Maple Leaf Rag is the 9th wonder of the world. It is a work of art in miniature and yet it has the potential to become one of the most gigantic works of art the world has ever known. On the miniature level it is equally at home in either the saloon or the salon while on the gigantic level it is the equal of any epic poem, heroic symphony, grand opera or Cecil B. De Mille movie ever made. Not many people are familiar with the super colossal side of Maple Leaf Rag. But that is only because they haven't discovered the secret link between the art of Maple Leaf Rag and the awesome power of number nine.

The music of Maple Leaf Rag is a study in nines. There are more configurations of 9 in this ragtime masterpiece than there are variations on the 4-note motif in the opening movement of Beethoven's 5th symphony. In order not to miss any of these 9's it is necessary to listen to many passages of Maple Leaf over and over again. This is the only correct way to listen to these 9's since they continually overlap one another and in certain passages of Maple Leaf there are a score or more 9's at work all at the same time. Obviously Maple Leaf Rag is going to become a very lengthy composition in the context of number 9 but more important it is also going to become a very meaningful composition since each of these 9's has a message all its own. When these messages are all put together and their full meaning disclosed, the results will be earthshaking and the whole world, not just this nation, will be hypnotized.

In a short article like the present one it isn't possible to mention more than a small percent of these 9's. Perhaps it would be best to cover only the first 9 bars in detail and then skim over the rest of the music very lightly. The reader might enjoy finding his or her own 9's without any outside help and anyway there are plenty of 9's for everybody.

The most striking feature in the opening line to Maple Leaf Rag is the array of E-flat octaves. They seem to be making some kind of formal declaration. Since there are 9 such octaves and since there are also 9 octaves in the bass it would seem likely that this declaration has something to do with the number 9. Furthermore these E-flat octaves cover exactly 9 of the 16th note possibilities in the opening two-bar statement. Altogether the E-flat octaves are played 18 times between treble and bass in the first 6 bars. But then they suddenly disappear and are never heard from again in the opening theme. This is indeed strange. What happened to the E-flat octaves? The answer is to be found in the mysterious E major chord which makes its first appearance in the 5th and 6th bars. This new chord engages in mortal combat with E-flat. After a brief clash there is a moment of silence (the last beat in bar 6). Then a new chord springs to life, a diminished 7th on the tonic and a close relative to this mysterious E major chord. This new chord is sounded 9

consecutive times by both the thumb and little finger of the right hand in bars 7, 8 and 9. A second glance will show that the thumb and little finger are also employed 9 times each in both the first and second lines of Maple Leaf Rag. But before we go any further we must find out more about the mysterious stranger - the E major chord.

Up until the appearance of the E major chord the only two chords to be used were the A-flat and the E-flat chords. These two chords made use of 7 different chromatic tones between them. Now with the appearance of E major an additional two chromatic tones are introduced bringing the over-all total to nine. These new tones are E-natural and B-natural. By some kind of frightening coincidence E-natural is the 9th chromatic tone of the A-flat chord and B-natural is the 9th chromatic tone of the E-flat chord. There is no other way to describe this mysterious E major chord than to call it "The Voice Of Nine." Somewhere in the dim recesses of memory I recall a rule which states that the odd numbered chromatic tones always correspond with the same odd numbered major chords in a circle of 5ths progression. This means that "The Voice Of Nine", the E major chord is also the 9th progression in a circle of 5ths ending on the A-flat chord. As we ponder the significance of all this, another shattering insight comes into view. Bars 5 and 6 which contain the "Voice Of Nine" do not have only 8 beats between them. <u>They Have Nine Beats Between Them.</u>

How is this possible? Maybe, as a Society member once suggested to me, I can't count. That may very well be but in this instance I think I am right. All four themes in Maple Leaf Rag begin on the upbeat. Since the number 9 is not concerned with such distinctions we should consider this opening upbeat as the initial down beat in the first bar. This means that the bar lines for the first 6 bars are all moved ahead one beat. This puts bars 5 and 6 in proper perspective. As they are now printed they are not identical with one another. But if we adopt these new bar lines it will be seen that bars 5 and 6 are indeed identical in every particular with an extra beat left over between bars 6 and 7. This extra beat - the moment of silence - is the 9th beat of the "Voice Of Nine."

It really makes no difference what bar measurements anybody uses. Either way the number 9 reveals itself in an indefinite variety of ways. If we use the bar measurements in their traditional locations we find 18 notes in each of the 1st, 3rd and 4th bars. (8 in the treble and 10 in the bass). There are a grand total of 72 notes in the complete first line. There are 9 melody notes in the treble of bars 5 and 6 (either chords or single notes). If we count the groupings of notes, both single and connected, in bars 5 and 6 we find a total of 9, with 5 being in the treble and 4 in the bass. These groupings of note beams (or bar stems) seem to have a separate life all their own. There are 9 such connecting beams in both the treble and bass in the first 6 bars which is the life span of the E-flat octave. There are 9 separate 16th note stems in each of the treble clefs through the first 3 lines of Maple Leaf Rag.

The bass line also has a thing of its own going. Right at the start it is played 18 consecutive times before resting. It is played a total of 9 times in the second line and, every time it is sounded, the right hand has a rest sign above it. Conversely, the bass is quiet on the 9 occasions that the right hand speaks in either single or multiple notes. For that matter the right hand is either completely or partially silent in 9 instances where the bass is struck in the first line as well. The bass is played 9 times on the same chord in the first line although the listener doesn't know which chord, tonic or dominant, it is until the E major chord shows it to be the dominant. The tonic chord is either played or implied in the bass a total of 9 times in both the 3rd and 4th lines of Maple Leaf Rag.

If we use the new adjusted bar measurements in the first 6 bars we are confronted with a completely different set of 9's. There are now 5 chords or single notes in the treble over 4 chords in the bass in each of the first 4 bars. Each 5 over 4 grouping falls on a single chord, either tonic or dominant. Altogether there are 36 such characters in the first line. The same 5 over 4 groupings are found in the 3rd and 4th lines, although it is desirable to treat bars 11 and 12 as one oversized grouping of 11 over 7 beginning with the E major chord in the treble. There are 36 such characters in each of the 3rd and 4th lines excluding the final upbeats and 81 notes altogether ( 9x9 ) on each line. The mysterious "Voice Of Nine" chord, the E major is played for 2 1/2 beats in each of the 3rd and 4th lines. Added to the 4 beats it already occupies in bars 5 and 6 this "Voice Of Nine" chord appears for a total of 9 beats in the first theme of Maple Leaf Rag.

The A-flat appears 11 times in the treble of the 3rd line and 9 times in the treble of the 4th and last line. In both lines the A-flat is played for the equivalent of 18 sixteenth notes including the first 9 on each line which take the form of 4 1/2 eighth notes. The A-flat appears a total of 12 times in the 5 octave ascent in bars 7 and 8. 9 of these A-flats help fuel this ascent while the remaining 3 try to stem the rising tide. This 2 bar ascent rises up at an angle of 45 degrees in keeping with the strict classical concept of an orderly and measured unfolding of ideas as opposed to the romantic concept of a sudden 90 degree leap. The first 6 bars of Maple Leaf Rag remain in the confines of the 9 note treble staff at an angle of 180 degrees. This surface calm is punctuated by rumblings from the bass where the left hand breaks out of the confines of the 9 note bass clef on 18 different occasions in these same opening 6 bars.

Bars 7 and 8 contain four slowly pulsating notes in the bass while the next 8 bars have more rapidly pulsating four note groups in the bass. Altogether there are 9 such bass note groupings. In the entire first theme there are 45 different single 16th notes and the entire structure of the first theme can be summarized in only 9 bars. (2 bars - repeated) (1 bar - repeated) (2 bars - not repeated) and (4 bars - repeated). The full impact of the section marked not repeated is felt only in the context of the complete range of 5 octaves. There are 64 beats in the opening theme - 63 musical and 1 silent. Since the opening theme is played 3 times this means that any number which is a multiple of 3 will eventually become a multiple of 9 when the complete score of Maple Leaf Rag is finished. Any multiple of 9 of course must always remain a multiple of 9.

Many ragtime writers such as Trebor Tichenor and Karl Kramer have pointed out the intensely dramatic character of some of the classic rags in general and Maple Leaf Rag in particular. The first theme of Maple Leaf Rag is constructed along lines of program or descriptive music. The opening line is amazingly flexible. It could represent a call to arms as a prelude to a tremendous battle scene. Then again it can be treated as a vamp phrase, sitting around and doing nothing but waiting for something to happen. This opening line could represent a calm day over the ocean followed in quick succession by the "Voice Of Nine", a violent upheaval, and a raging storm at sea which diminishes somewhat in the last 4 bars of the opening theme. Since it is possible for everyone to relive in a matter of seconds the worst storm they ever witnessed, Maple Leaf Rag could be subtitled "Recollections of a storm at sea." If Cecil B. De Mille were still alive he could treat this opening theme as the Biblical story of creation with the Voice speaking through the void and resting on the 9th beat. The second theme with its contrasting rhythms could represent the clash of opposing armies or it could represent various dance steps of the happy people who don't realize they are in the eye of the hurricane. The epic

trio of Maple Leaf Rag represents the storm at its height or the battle at its decisive juncture while the lyrical 4th theme sounds like a hymn of victory or relief or joy somewhat reminiscent of the last movement of Beethoven's 9th symphony.

There are many hidden meanings in the score of Maple Leaf Rag. What these meanings are depends in large measure upon how the listener interprets the significance of all these 9's. 9 is one of the measurements of reality, and to listen to Maple Leaf Rag is to commune with old Mother Nature herself. People don't have to go to the great outdoors to get in harmony with the universe. All any person has to do is to go down to the nearest tavern and listen to the pianist play Maple Leaf Rag while everybody gathers around in quiet meditation.

It might be a good idea at this point to pause and consider some of the universal implications in the number 9. The more we know of number 9 the more benefit we will derive from listening to Maple Leaf Rag, and the more we listen to Maple Leaf Rag the more we will understand number 9. This is known as circular reasoning which brings to mind the fact that there are 360 degrees in a circle.

There are also 360 degrees in the Zodiac, terrestial longitude and a perfect sphere. The ancient Greek scholar Pythagoras spoke of the MUSIC OF THE SPHERES. He believed this music resulted from the harmonious motion of the planets in the heavens. Although he didn't know it at the time, there are 9 planets in our solar system. Early Christians also thought of 9 in musical terms. They believed in the 9 Angelic Choirs which may have been another version of the music of the spheres. The very word 'Music' itself comes from the 9 muses of ancient greek mythology. Music is nothing more nor less than the mathematics of sound. Once a piece of music is interpreted along mathematical lines it automatically attains a cosmic significance. Philosophers and scientists down through the ages have always believed that the key to understanding reality is to be found in the mathematical order of the universe. Only the language of mathematics is precise enough and unambiguous enough to correctly reflect this order.

Maple Leaf Rag seems to reflect this cosmic design in a very special way because it combines the number 9 with its cosmic equivalent, the number 4. 9 is divisible into the 360 degrees of a perfect sphere in multiples of 4. The number 4 is common to all music but only Maple Leaf Rag combines it with 9. There are 144 bars of music in Maple Leaf Rag, a multiple of 4 and 9. There are 9 different thematic statements to Maple Leaf Rag built around 4 themes, AABBACCDD. The all powerful ending to Maple Leaf Rag is a result of a combination of 9 and 4. 9 notes are found in the treble clef for each of the last 4 bars or 36 treble notes altogether. There are 64 beats in every theme of Maple Leaf Rag (a multiple of 4). But each theme contains an initial upbeat so there are 63 beats (a multiple of 9) in the main body of all the music.

One of the most intriguing astronomical laws centers around a combination of 9 and 4. This is 'Bode's Law' which isn't a law in the strict sense of the term since it is only 90% accurate. This 'law' is built on the simple series 0-3-6-12-24-48-96-etc., doubling each number to arrive at the next. Every 2 consecutive numbers following the zero add up to a multiple of 9. Bode added 4 to each number in this series giving a new set of numbers: 4-7-10-16-28-52-100 etc. If the planet Neptune would somehow conveniently disappear then this series would give the correct proportionate distance from the sun of all planets in our solar system including an orbit of asteroids or pieces-of-planets at point 28. It may

be that Maple Leaf Rag, like Bode's law, reflects only 90% of reality. But 90 to Maple Leaf Rag is the equivalent of 100 to anything else.

There are three basic ways of looking at the universe and these 3 ways are represented by the numbers 1, 4, 9. All three numbers are perfect squares and incidentally the 1st, 4th, and 9th chromatic tones beginning on middle C of the keyboard form a perfect A-flat chord which is the opening chord and key signature of Maple Leaf Rag. First of all the universe is One. Secondly it is 4-dimensional and thirdly, as a practical matter, it is 9-dimensional. There is a tri-unity or threeness running through everything in nature. 9 is the ultimate threeness of nature since it is the threeness of three itself. Thus the structural limits of the universe - Space, Time, Motion - can be expressed in terms of 9 somewhat as follows: Height-Length-Breadth; Past-Present-Future; From-At-To. The four dimensional theory dispenses with the concept of Motion as having any effect on Space and Time but still acknowledges its very real presence. 4 and 9 are just two different ways of looking at the same thing, which in this case happens to be the universe.

When Maple Leaf Rag is thought of in terms of 9 it immediately conjures up the concept of Space, Time, Motion. No longer is Maple Leaf Rag just a work of art in miniature. It now becomes a work of art as gigantic as the Space-Time continuum itself. Any work of art must stand the test of time and one reason Maple Leaf Rag has stood the test of time so well is because the basic measurements of time are multiples of 9. These measurements range from the 9 billion plus vibrations per second of the Cesium atom to the 25, 920 years in a Great Sidereal Year. It may be noted in passing that two other numbers usually associated with time, 7 and 12, are arrived at by adding 3 to both 4 and 9. Some critics may have some reservations about Maple Leaf Rag as regards Space-Time, but they can't fault the concept of Maple Leaf Rag being in a state of motion as constant as that of the universe.

There is still something missing though in the super colossal image of Maple Leaf Rag. This is the element of high drama and suspense, sudden death and intrigue and all those diverse elements which must be present in any great epic. Jazz has its mystical quality in the death-wish complexes of such artists as Buddy Bolden, Bix, Bessie, and Charlie the Bird. Maple Leaf Rag too has a certain fatal mystique about it and only the number 9 can reveal this hidden quality. Consider the following 9 year, or near nine year cycles in the life of Maple Leaf Rag.

| | |
|---|---|
| 1908/09 | Scott Joplin and John Stark sever business connections. |
| 1917 | Scott Joplin dies. |
| 1926/27 | Confusion over Maple Leaf recopyright. John Stark dies. |
| 1935 | All unpublished John Stark manuscripts destroyed, including some early Joplin material. |
| 1953 | Brun Campbell dies. First white man to play Maple Leaf Rag. |
| 1962 | John Stark's eldest son, born in the same year as Joplin, dies. Musical executor of Joplin's estate dies. Orchestral manuscript to Treemonisha lost in confusion which followed. |

It would seem as if number 9 might be too strong for those with squeamish stomaches. But a moment's reflection will show that the founders of Maple Leaf Rag didn't fare any worse than the founders of many of the world's great religions. Any message of universal importance must be presented in terms which will stir the imaginations of men. Otherwise it will be ignored. This is merely nature's way of saying what T. V. commercials say every day; "Let us dramatize this message."

There is much to meditate upon in the pages of Maple Leaf Rag. Maple Leaf is the Classic of all classic rags. There is an 18 year period between its birth and the death of Scott Joplin. There is a similar 18 year period between the deaths of the three greatest composers in the Classical era of western music. Mozart (died 1791), Haydn (died 1809) and the early Beethoven (died 1827). All three years are multiples of 9. Once again we find ourselves back in ancient Greece because the whole concept of classical art had its origins there. If anyone says Maple Leaf Rag is all Greek to them, don't laugh. They may be saying something very profound.

Only a brief outline of the last three themes will be given here. Otherwise this article, like Maple Leaf Rag, will last forever. The first two lines of the 2nd theme cover eleven bars and represent a joyous dance scene. With the addition of the usual upbeat this dance scene lasts exactly 45 beats. The dance is a mixture of 3/4 time in the treble over a 2/4 time in the bass. Starting with the 12th bar a ponderous new rhythm in 4/4 time enters the scene and announces its presence with 9 consecutive octaves in the bass. There is a brief moment of bewilderment (bars 13 and 14) after which another run of 9 octaves and octave chords split between the bass and the treble leads into a repeat of the dance section. However the stranger in bar 12 again interrupts the dance and demands that the festivities stop. The polyrhythmic joy cannot survive this new presence and the dance comes to an end.

This second theme moves along in 2 bar passages. There are 9 passages in all. Seven 2 bar passages and two 1 bar passages (bars 11 and 12). These last two bars do not complement each other. There is extensive use of octaves in this theme. The 11 bar dance section alone contains 27 octaves in the treble. The most prominent octave would be F-natural which is struck 9 times in bars 3 through 8. There are 9 different octaves used out of the 12 chromatic possibilities. The G-flat octave which is the 9th octave in order of appearance, bears the same relationship to F-natural (1/2 tone higher) that E-natural bore to E-flat in the first theme. Trebor Tichenor in his analysis of Maple Leaf Rag calls this section "the tale of an ecstatic joy." This feeling of joy is equally applicable to either a dance section or to the initial stages of a battle into which men have traditionally flung themselves with great gusto.

The trio erupts with 9 A-flat chords in the treble including the usual upbeat. Here once again we can imagine we hear the "Voice Of Nine." This time there is an echo effect as of repeated claps of thunder. There are six dotted chords having an elapsed playing time of 9 beats followed by an equal number of gigantic 9th chords where the 9th note is struck by the thumb rather than the little finger. In between these mountainous blasts there are darting little 16th notes, 18 in all, which dance over the landscape like crackling flashes of lightning. The B-flat 9th note is struck 9 times in the treble of the first line and 18 times before the closing four bar section. Following the last 9th chord in the tenth bar, the storm (or battle) reaches a climax over the nine octaves and octave chords in bars 11-12-13. The last three bars suggest 9 strong beats of the Charleston. There is tremendous power generated by the bass clef with a total of 63 octaves and 54 chords supplying most of this power through the full two statements of the trio.

The initial effect of the 4th theme is that of a heavy burden being removed or of the sun suddenly shining through the clouds after an oppressive thunderstorm. It is like Alice stepping through the Looking Glass into a new world. The old landmarks are somehow changed and suddenly instead of just 9's we also have 10's. It is almost as if we had

evolved into a higher stage of being. There are 10 F-naturals (bars 3 - 8) where there had been nine in the second theme. There are 10 A-flats in the upper melody line: 10 tied notes: 10 single 16th notes in the first line: another 10 of the same notes before the last eight bar statement: 10 F-naturals in the opening line, etc.

The 4th theme begins with five 8th notes which is very unusual for Maple Leaf Rag. 8th notes are used very sparingly and where they had been used in the preceding themes it was usually in some connection with 9. But then the 4th theme ends its first statement with four 8th notes so that the repeat of the theme carries over into 9 consecutive eighth notes. Now all of a sudden the second statement of the 4th theme begins to sound less strange and a lot more familiar. It seems that the 9's are not about to surrender their supremacy after all and the last four bars end with a crushing reaffirmation of the power of 9. The treble line strikes A-flat a total of 9 times and the bass line ends this section in the same manner in which it ended the dance festival - 9 consecutive octaves pounded out by the left hand.

One explanation comes to mind for the sudden change from 9 to 10. The fourth theme begins on the subdominant which is the tonic chord of the trio just completed. The first time around there is a distinct impression that we are still in the key of the trio but by the start of the second statement it is obvious that a return to the original key of A-flat has been made. It is almost as if we had plotted a course for 14 (9 plus 5 flats) and now with the unexpected return to 4 flats it is necessary to change over to 10 in order to reach 14. Whatever the reason for the change in the atmosphere, it is obvious that the battle is over and that grateful voices are raised in songs of thanksgiving. Max Morath has an interesting interpretation of this 4th theme. He slows the action down to the pace of a slow ballad and depends on a return to the first theme for a final reaffirmation of the power of 9. For other interpretations of Maple Leaf Rag the reader is strongly encouraged to get hold of a copy of Herwin Lp 401 "They All Played The Maple Leaf Rag."

A few words should also be said about Maple Leaf Rag Song in connection with the number 9. The most intriguing aspect about this song is the use of the first person singular pronoun I, My, Me. This pronoun is used exactly 9 times in each of the first two stanzas. The 3rd stanza uses it only 4 times. (6 times if the plural We is included.) The letter I is the 9th letter of our alphabet and this song can be considered as being another "Voice Of Nine." The famous chorus contains 9 words in its opening line and, if "Maple Leaf Rag" is considered to be one word, then the second line of the chorus also contains 9 words. Not many people are familiar with the verse but the opening line here also contains 9 words: "I came from Ole Virginny, from the County Acomac."

Maple Leaf Rag is quite an education in itself. It covers a lot of territory, Physics, Great Works Of Art, Ancient Greece. The only trouble with it is that it is so enjoyable people don't want to hear any deep messages which it might contain. What people will have to do is to discipline themselves. Force themselves to listen to Maple Leaf Rag without enjoying it and then perhaps they will be in a fit state for a little transcendental meditation. Once we have discovered all the 9's in Maple Leaf Rag then perhaps we can play it backwards and discover some more 9's. Or would those be 6's. I'm sure there are plenty of sceptics who don't believe one iota of anything written down here. But they must admit that one of the tests of a great work of art is that it lends itself readily to different interpretations. Everyone will agree that this interpretation is certainly 'different'.

- THE END -

## ANNIVERSARY YEAR

## SURPRISE SHEET MUSIC OFFER

We have unexpectedly acquired a limited supply of four different ORIGINAL printings of large-size Ragtime sheet music in unused condition featuring multi-colored title covers. This music is almost a unique discovery and seemingly kept from the public view for more than 60 years in order that THE RAGTIME SOCIETY would come into its possession in time for a special highlighting of our 10th Anniversary Year. The music is at once a collector's find and for many will offer an opportunity to create suitably framed conversation piece wall mountings:

LOUISIANNA RAG - (Leon M. Block)
(See photo on back cover of THE RAGTIMER Jan./Feb. 1971)

TURKISH TROPHIES - (Sara B. Egan)
(See photo on back cover of THE RAGTIMER Mar./Apr. 1971)

WEDDING BELLS RAG - (Al. B. Coney)
(See photo on back cover of THE RAGTIMER May/June 1971)

DYNAMITE - A NOISY RAG - (P. Biese & F. H. Klickman)

OFFERED AS A LOT OF FOUR POSTPAID - $7.50

(Restricted to one lot per member pending servicing of initial orders.)

THE RAGTIME SOCIETY Inc., P. O. Box 520, Weston, Ontario, Canada.

## IT'S RAGTIME IN JUNE AT ST. LOUIS

That's the flash news from our itinerant St. Louis member, Betty Redelsheimer.

8th Annual National Ragtime Festival
Goldenrod Showboat (Foot of Locust St.)
St. Louis, Missouri
Wed. June 7th thru Sun. June 11th

Be one of the army of ragtime pilgrims who will soon be saying,
"Meet Me In St. Louis"

## TORONTO RAGTIMERS GATHER FOR ANOTHER RAGTIME MINI BASH PARTY

By JACK CUFF

The Surf Room of the Dutch Sisters Motel, on the shore of Lake Ontario, was the scene for the second Mini Bash of Toronto ragtimers and their guests. Nearly 100 attended the Saturday night function held February 5th, 1972. The winter's ice and snow along with cold weather provided very little in the way of a deterrent to local Society members. The warm and cheerful surroundings of the Surf Room interior made it easy to forget about the outside chill.

Two fine old upright pianos were brought together for the occasion. By the time the party ended in the small hours of Sunday morning a memorable serving of conviviality and music had been enthusiastically shared by all.

The evening began with an hour for socializing during which Zella Connell played some ragtime tape recordings. Jean Cuff set up a display of the records currently being offered for sale by the Society.

The musical mood was introduced for the evening by the Society's president Idamay MacInnes and the writer in a two piano rendition of "Maple Leaf Rag".

A succession of solos and two piano duets produced a ragtime spectrum that seemed to search out every hue. The music of Scott Joplin, James P. Johnson, Jelly Roll Morton, Joseph Lamb and Eubie Blake was frequently heard. The works of other - indeed many other - composers added to the musical content. At frequent intervals the playing of songs in ragtime style invoked a lusty singing response from the crowded circle that often ringed the two pianos.

A fine evening of music was supplied by Dave Flowitt, Gordon Sheard, David Fleury, Isabelle Stewart, Isabel Dickson, Malcolm Hansen, Austin Kitchen and Mark Wittman. Dit Holt on banjo and Bob Williamson on drums supplied a sterling accompaniment for appropriate occasions. Kazoos and spoons were also in evidence from time to time.

A delightful interlude happened as midnight ushered in Gail Bell-Smith's birthday. Bill McCrostie commanded a lowering of the lights as he and Gail's husband Pell entered the room carrying the birthday cake with candles aglow to the cheers of the ragtimers. Everyone approved as Pell and Gail took over the dance floor to the strains of "Let Me Call You Sweetheart".

A late lunch was served by the staff at tables set up around the Surf Room. A fine job of decorating the room with a "Ragtime Atmosphere" had been arranged by the artistic members of the Committee.

Thanks for a successful party of ragtime fun goes to the hard-working Committee consisting of Bill McCrostie, chairman, Gail Bell-Smith, Zella Connell, Isabel Dickson, Isabelle Stewart, Marj. Wittman, Messrs. Barna, Bell-Smith, Jarvis, McEachnie and Wittman.

We are advised that plans are already underway for a third mini bash in May of this year.

# LETTERS

Letters are welcome from members. Excerpts believed to be of general interest are passed along in this section of THE RAGTIMER.

"In one of your back issues a fellow said he thought he was the only Ragtimer living in Japan. I wasn't in Japan, but I think I can safely claim to be the only Ragtimer ever to play ragtime (rough, but definitely ragtime) on a piano in the back of a combat helicopter in Vietnam."

Capt. David H. Wammer
Ogden, Utah, U.S.A.

**********

"I would be pleased to hear from any travelling Ragtimers who come to Geneva during their tour."

Vincent Terbois
5 Chemin Lehmann
1218 Grand Saconnex
Geneva, Switzerland.

**********

"Happy Activities" - Peter Lundberg, Sweden.

"Keep up the Great Work" - Rev. Ronald J. Cox, Ohio, U.S.A.

(Ed. Comment - Thanks for the words of encouragement these and many other members have sent along. When members make their enthusiasm known, by indicating approval of the efforts being made to further the SOCIETY'S objectives, it adds fuel to the cause. We hasten to add that constructive criticism and suggestions are also welcome)

**********

"Thank you for including a reprint of the 'PARISIAN RAG' in THE RAGTIMER. It was a pleasant surprise. I hope it will be possible to include a reprint in each of the future issues."

Leonard J. Fliedner
Flushing, New York, U. S. A.

(Ed. Comment - We reprint a rag song in THE RAGTIMER from time to time in our attempt to vary the content within the limit of space available. However, the REPRINT CLUB is considered the prime source for ragtime music. The attention of interested members is directed to the notice in this issue concerning CHAPTER VII)

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"Has any kind soul ever compiled an index to back copies of THE RAGTIMER? I often have to go thru the whole series to find what I want."

Mrs. Frank T. Sayers
Ostrander, Ohio, U. S. A.

(Ed. Comment - We agree it's a great idea - It is something that is needed which can become another tenth Anniversary project. Who is willing to become the "kind soul"? Perhaps Mrs. Sayers is prepared to be trapped by her own suggestion)

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"I read with great interest Roger Hankins' article 'The Nine Lives Of Maple Leaf Rag'. I decided then and there to get 'Riverside Rag' by Chas. Cohen ready for the Bash next October. Believe it or not my decision occurred at 2:18 p. m., February 7, 1972."

"I am a great believer in number nine - so take a look:"

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Day - | 7 | (Note - dice) |
| Month - | 2 | |
| | 9 | |
| Hour - | 2 | |
| | 11 | (Note - dice) |
| Minutes - | 18 | ( 2x9 ) |
| | 29 | |
| Year - | 1972 | |
| Objective - | 2001 | (I will be 100 that year) |

John L. Davidson
Galt, Ont., Canada.

**********

"The whimsical piece on '9' by R. Hankins is a real winner."

Thomas W. Perry
Watertown, Mass., U.S.A.

**********

"I flew down to Atlanta last weekend and took in both performances of Treemonisha. Not much Ragtime as you know, but gorgeous melodies and lush harmonies. Whole gang there - Had a great time - Most of us stayed at the same hotel."

Roger Hankins
Boston, Mass., U.S.A.

**********

"Betty Redelsheimer and I had a marvelous time in Atlanta and I am so glad she 'gave me the orders' to get there for Treemonisha. The opera was beautifully done, and of course it was another grand reunion with the Blake's, Montgomery's, Morath's, Dick Zimmerman, Al and Diana Rose, Knocky Parker and the rest of the gang."

Gerry Vondy
Denver, Colorado, U.S.A.

(Ed. Comment - In an early issue of THE RAGTIMER we plan to review the 1971 - 1972 ascendancy of Scott Joplin's reputation as a composer which reached an all-time high when performances of his opera Treemonisha were given at Atlanta on January 28th and 29th, 1972, by the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra with Robert Shaw conducting. It was part of a festival week featuring the music of black Americans held at the Atlanta Memorial Arts Center. Eubie Blake was also honored for his contributions to the black musical culture. A tip of our hat to all the Ragtimers who demonstrated their interest by their attendance)

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CATALOGUE NOTICE

A revised catalogue of sheet music and other items for sale by THE RAGTIME SOCIETY Inc. is in the preparatory stage. As soon as it is ready, a copy will be mailed to all members.
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# RECORD REVIEW

by
TEX
WYNDHAM

Nonesuch H-71257 'Heliotrope Bouquet Piano Rags 1900-1970'

Selections: A Rag-time Nightmare, The Easy Winners, Heliotrope Bouquet, Ethiopia Rag, Pegasus, Wall Street Rag, Pork And Beans, Graceful Ghost, Seabiscuits, Brass Knuckles.

This Lp is the second Lp of ragtime piano solos to be released on Nonesuch, usually a classical label, following up its highly successful Lp of Scott Joplin rags played by Joshua Rifkin (see our review in the July-August 1971 issue of THE RAGTIMER). As a result, most people will probably view this record in the light of Rifkin's Lp, making a comparison that is somewhat unfair both to Rifkin and to the talented young (born 1938) pianist on this Lp, William Bolcom.

The similarities in the two Lps are obvious. Both pianists are thoroughly familiar with and sympathetic to ragtime, and both are highly skilled technicians who can and do tackle some of the more difficult rags and not only make them sound easy, but also have plenty of ability left over to add dynamics and shadings that bring out the richness of the compositions at hand.

Rifkin's Lp, however, was deliberately limited in scope, concentrating on Joplin's rags and generally on the more introspective and classical-sounding of those. The logical next step for Nonesuch would be to release an Lp that presented the field of ragtime in all its scope, including several of the better composers from the ragtime years, some examples of every ragtime style from the more reserved to the raggedy and stomping, and perhaps a few of the rags that are being currently composed by today's ragtimers. This excellent Lp of piano solos by Bolcom is precisely such an album.

Bolcom plays with a light, pulsing rhythm that keeps the good cheer of ragtime in all the tunes, from Luckey Roberts' no-holds-barred 'Pork And Beans' to Joplin's gentler 'Wall Street Rag'. He builds the tunes well also, often increasing the volume a bit on the repeat of a strain, and winding up with a nice big ride-out as on Lamb's 'Ethiopia Rag'. Moreover, Bolcom tailors the mood to fit each bar: listen, for example, to the sudden softness as he moves from the second to the third strains of Scott's 'Pegasus' and, later in the same piece, the full, majestic sound of the second strain reprise that doesn't lose a scintilla of rhythm.

Contemporary ragtime composers start out with virtually three strikes against them. First of all, everyone is conditioned to hearing the Joplin-Scott-Lamb material that has survived over the years. Thus, one unconsciously tends to compare new composers to these unique geniuses of ragtime. Obviously, though, we can't expect all new composers to be Joplins. Second, new composers will inevitably draw on the musical concepts that have come along since the ragtime years, and many ragtimers are unfairly going to reject any tune with a new sound without deciding if the sound is valid ragtime. Third, new rags

will be unfamiliar tunes, with none of the old-shoe comfort of the classic standards we all know. However, if we refuse to hear new ragtime composers unless they write the way Joplin wrote in 1910, we will do ragtime a great disservice.

Having unburdened myself of that sermon, let me state that the three contemporary rags presented on this Lp indicate a talent of quite a high order. 'Graceful Ghost' is the least successful of the three; opening well with a bittersweet and, yes, haunting first strain, the tune tends to meander through a couple of other strains before ending on a strong note with a reprise of the first strain. 'Seabiscuits', which appears to be in the fiendishly difficult key of F-sharp and moves to B-natural, is successful all the way through -- a first-rate rag with shades of James Scott in the second and fourth strains. Moreover, one can readily recognize some musical evolution in 'Seabiscuits' as it works in a few novel intervals and harmonies along the way while remaining completely true to the idiom.

Those two tunes were composed entirely by Bolcom, but a special paragraph must be reserved for 'Brass Knuckles', which Bolcom composed in collaboration with another talented ragtimer, Bill Albright. Perhaps some of you will be put off by some of the modern harmonies and deliberate dischords that turn up in this piece, but to me, it is a masterpiece that succeeds beautifully on two levels. First of all, it's a good composition with well-worked-out, musically-valid, nicely-interwoven ideas. Secondly, as a piece of deliberate self-parody, it is absolutely hilarious. The title is an absolute inspiration, and is well fulfilled by the tune in the same sense that the novelty rags of the mid-twenties, such as 'Kitten On The Keys', developed the basic notion of the title. If you let yourself think so, 'Brass Knuckles' paints a picture of a pianist with above-average skill tackling an excellent composition that's a bit too difficult for him and trying to power his way through the tougher parts with sheer brute force. You'll love it.

On the minus side, I simply cannot understand why some of the repeats of strains are omitted in a few of the rags. It seems unlikely that there was any particular time pressure, as the total playing time on the Lp is only a little over thirty-two minutes. Inasmuch as Nonesuch offers these tunes as compositions worthy of serious consideration, it seems odd that there should be this type of deviation from the printed score in these performances.

On balance, though, this is a marvelous Lp that has something in it for just about all types of ragtime fans. I recommend it, and inasmuch as Nonesuch is a relatively low-priced label, I can safely say that, even if you disagree with me, you haven't got much to lose.

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*  REMINDER
*
*  ARE YOU MAKING PLANS TO ATTEND
*  THE RAGTIME SOCIETY BASH - 1972?
*
*  to be held at the CARA INN, TORONTO,
*  on the Weekend of Saturday, October 14, 1972.
*
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## NEW RECORD FOR SALE

As a service to members, THE RAGTIME SOCIETY Inc., is currently in a position to fill orders for the following new release. The price quoted includes charge for postage.

### EUBIE BLAKE MUSIC - $6.00 each

EBM #1 - Eubie Blake featuring Ivan Harold Browning.
Note: This record was produced by our member Carl Seltzer.

Side One - devoted to piano solos by Eubie Blake including his two new rags which he played at our last "Bash" entitled "Novelty Rag" and "Melodic Rag".

Side Two - features the team of Blake & Browning. Mr. Browning, now in his 80's, was the original leading man in Sissle & Blake's musical show of 1921 "Shuffle Along".

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## MUSIC REPRINT CLUB NEWS

### CHAPTER VII

Menbership enrollments have started to arrive. It is too early for a decision to proceed. Provided the enrollments continue to come in at the same pace we should reach the required minimum in time for a favourable notice in the next issue of THE RAGTIMER. It is important that members who are planning to join the REPRINT CLUB do so quickly in the interest of bringing about a positive decision to go ahead with CHAPTER VII.

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# SOMETHING DOING...

JOHN ARPIN - commencing April 3rd in the Odyssey Lounge at the top of the New Regency Hyatt, 9:00 p. m. to 1:00 a. m. in Toronto.

JOHN MADDOX - at the Holiday Inn, Yakima, Wash., until the end of April.

MIKE MONTGOMERY - at The Dakota Inn, Rathskeller, Detroit, Mich., Fri. Nights.

MAX MORATH - on the road with his show "At The Turn Of The Century".

CHARLIE RASCH - & "Sister Kate" with the Jacktown Jazz Band, at Bill Cones' Downstairs Saloon, Jackson, Mich., Fri. & Sat. Nights.

TREBOR TICHENOR - and the Saint Louis Ragtimers can be heard on The Goldenrod Showboat in St. Louis, Missouri.

PETER TURNER - with the Apex Jazz Band, at the Sword In Hand, Bury, St. Edmund's, England.

TERRY WALDO - at Deibel's Restaurant, German Village, Columbus, Ohio, Wed. & Thurs. Nights.

TEX WYNDHAM - and The Red Lion Jazz Band, appearing regularly, at The Surry Restaurant, 1100 Philadelphia Pike, Wilmington, Del.

PERFORMERS: Please keep us posted on your whereabouts and your schedule will appear in this column.

MAX MORATH'S

# Giants of RAGTIME

## Scott Joplin ★ Eubie Blake

## Luckey Roberts ★ Jim Europe ★ Tom Turpin

Gladiolus Rag ★ Scott Joplin's New Rag ★ "Stoptime" Rag ★ The Chevy Chase ★ Dicky's on Seventh Avenue ★ Fizz Water ★ Tricky Fingers ★ Troublesome Ivories ★ The Junk Man Rag ★ The Music Box Rag ★ Pork and Beans ★ Castle House Rag ★ The Harlem Rag

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